

Kentucky Teacher

Brent Tackett
Western Hills High School
(Franklin County)
Five years in the classroom



August 2007

News for the Nation's Most Innovative Educators

www.education.ky.gov



Photo by Tim Thornberry, Education Cabinet

Beginning a new school year

Brady Thornton handles a variety of tasks as the new associate principal at Anderson County High School during the last weeks before classes start. Kentucky teachers and students began returning to classrooms for the 2007-08 school year between mid-July and early August.

Erwin declines post; board begins new search

By Lisa Y. Gross

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On July 13, Barbara Erwin, the Illinois educator selected by the Kentucky Board of Education as the state's next education commissioner, announced that she was declining the position. She cited overwhelming and acute scrutiny of her performance in previous jobs as the primary reason.

In a letter to Board Chair Keith Travis, Erwin said her original plan was to retire in August 2007. "I believe it is in the best interests of all if I maintain those plans of retirement," she said. "I have so enjoyed my very brief opportunity to work with you and the rest of the board."

Travis said he supported Erwin's decision with regret.

"I and the other board members believe that Barbara Erwin was the best possible candidate for the job," he said. "I am disappointed that the pressure she encountered has led to this."

After a months-long search, Erwin was named the top candidate for the position of Kentucky education commissioner in

April. Her most current position was that of superintendent of Community Unit District 303 schools in St. Charles, Ill.

The board met in special session on July 14 in Frankfort to discuss plans to reopen the search for a new commissioner. Members agreed to ask Deputy Commissioner Kevin Noland to serve as interim education commissioner on a temporary basis. The board will seek another, more long-term interim commissioner to serve while the search for an individual to fill the permanent position is in progress.

A call for applicants for the interim and permanent positions is posted on the Kentucky Department of Education's Web site at www.education.ky.gov. The board does

See ERWIN on Page 9

State board stays busy during summer

By Cathy Lindsey

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The Kentucky Board of Education stayed busy this summer preparing policy for the upcoming school year and discussing its strategic priorities for helping schools and districts reach proficiency by 2014. The board used its July 11 meeting to begin setting its priorities for the upcoming 2008-10 budget proposal.

At its June meeting, the board received an update from Kentucky Department of Education staff on implementation of SB 130, which added three readiness exams – EXPLORE, PLAN and the ACT – to the state's assessment system.

In September 2006, EXPLORE was administered to all 8th graders in Kentucky. Results have been sent to all schools but will not be included in 2006-07 accountability calculations.

At the same time, PLAN was given to all 10th graders. PLAN results, which also have been sent to schools, will compose 5 percent

See TEACHERS on Page 10

See STATE on Page 9

Teachers write plays for student audiences

By Faun S. Fishback

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They use rap, folk dances and the blues.

Their subjects are pioneer living, healthy lifestyles and methamphetamine abuse.

They choose the stage as a venue for their messages.

Their audiences are elementary, middle and high school students.

They are playwrights.

They are Kentucky teachers.

They are Kate Bortner, English teacher at North Oldham High School (Oldham County), Lydia DiMartino-Ellis, library media specialist at Bate Middle School (Danville Independent), and Carol Withrow, intermediate writing instructor and P-5 literacy coach at McNabb Elementary (Paducah Independent).

The three say the need to share information with students in a different way was the biggest impetus to their becoming playwrights. Grants and community partnerships helped make their work happen.

The teachers also value the opportunity to show their students that adults write, are creative and have a passion to inform. "It is vitally important to me as a literacy instructor that my students see me engaged in literacy processes," said Withrow.

Yellow brick road

Carol Withrow and her father, Paducah cardiologist Patrick Withrow, wanted to collaborate on a project to promote good health among Paducah-area youth. The doctor, medical director of the new Baptist Heart Center at Western Baptist Hospital, penned a song, "The Overweight, Out-of-

Shape, Sick-and-Tired Blues."

However, Carol Withrow wanted to give youngsters more information "about why it's important to make good choices in our lives," she said. She borrowed well-known characters from the "Wizard of Oz" to create a play about health issues.

In "The Wonderful Wizard of Health," a good witch leads Dorothy, the Tin Man, Scarecrow and Lion to the Wizard. He gives the overweight, out-of-shape group help with heart-health issues such as hypertension, obesity and smoking.

Through words and music, the Wizard



What's Inside

Bulletin Board	2
Every child – proficient and prepared for success.....	3
District-wide collaboration enhances school libraries.....	4
Virtual learning campus	5
Collaborative classrooms benefit all students.....	6
New special ed program focuses on student performance	7
Teacher cadets get an education	8
News for school leaders	11
Arabic language instruction in Bowling Green	12

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Bulletin Board



Lancaster Elementary School, Garrard County

Photo by Tim Thornberry, Education Cabinet

Conferences

Kids Are Worth It!

The 11th annual Kids Are Worth It! Conference will be held Sept. 5-7 at the Marriott Griffin Gate Hotel in Lexington. Individuals interested in preventing the abuse and neglect of children and improving the safety, well-being and permanency for children and families are invited to attend.

www.pcaky.org/default.aspx?tabID=1

Library/school media

The Kentucky Library Association and Kentucky School Media Association will hold a joint conference Sept. 19-22 in Louisville. The theme is "Building and Strengthening Communities: Advocating Our Future."

www.kylibasn.org/upcomingconf353.cfm

Psychology in schools

The Kentucky Association for Psychology in the Schools (KAPS) fall conference is scheduled Sept. 19-21 in Lexington. The conference theme is "30 Years in History: Influencing Progress for the Future."

www.psychology.uky.edu/kaps

'Literacy for All'

The theme for the Kentucky Reading Association's annual conference is "Literacy for All." The conference will be held in Lexington Sept. 20-22. Early-bird registration ends Aug. 31.

www.kyreading.org

Social studies

The Kentucky Council for the Social Studies has scheduled its annual conference for Sept. 26-27 in Bowling Green. Conference rates on rooms are available until Aug. 26. Conference registration is due by Sept. 1.

www.kcss.org

'Safe Schools – Successful Students'

The 13th annual "Safe Schools – Successful Students" conference will be held Oct. 1-2 at the Galt House East in Louisville.

www.kysafeschools.org/calendar/?event=214

Art educators

"It's All in Your Head: Exploring Artistic Possibilities" is the theme for this year's Kentucky Art Education Association Conference. It will be held at the Drawbridge Inn in Ft. Mitchell on Oct. 19-20.

www.kyaea.org/index_id_194.htm

Assessment coordinators

The Kentucky Association for Assessment Coordinators will hold the 2007 Scott Trimble Workshop on Instruction and Assessment Oct. 29-30 in Louisville. The deadline for early registration is Oct. 1. Regular and onsite registration also are available.

www.kaac.org

Dropout Prevention Network

The 19th Annual National Dropout Prevention Network Conference will be held in Louisville Oct. 27-31. The theme is "Guiding ALL Students to the Winner's Circle." Sessions will focus on the most current strategies, programs and research to reduce dropout rates and increase graduation rates.

www.dropoutprevention.org/conferen/conferen.htm#2007_Conf

Events

State fair educational opportunities

The Kentucky State Fair offers a variety of educational opportunities for students. The 2007 Kaleidoscope Discovery Zone exhibition explains "The Mosaic of Life: Why Biodiversity is Key to Our Survival on Earth." Teachers booking field trips will receive materials connecting many state fair displays and events to the classroom. Discounted admission is available to school groups booked and confirmed in advance. The Kentucky State Fair is Aug. 16-26 in Louisville.

www.kystatefair.org/special_exhibits/educational_exhibit/index.html

'Kentucky Adventures'

Kentucky history, both real and legend, comes alive in "Kentucky Adventures" Sept. 10-Oct. 24 at Old Fort Harrod State Park. The Mercer County Senior High School Department of Drama presents the core-content-driven, interactive play. Afterward, students can tour Old Fort Harrod State Park, Kentucky's first permanent settlement, and the Mansion Museum. For reservations or more information, call (859) 734-3314.

www.parks.ky.gov/findparks/recparks/fh

Kentucky Folklife Festival

The Kentucky Folklife Festival is Sept. 20-22 in Frankfort. Performances by musicians and dancers, demonstrations by artists and cooks, and hands-on activities link to social studies and arts and humanities content. Admission for school groups is \$2 per person.

www.history.ky.gov/sub.php?pageid=106§ionid=15

Resources

Updated Kentucky writing manual

The Kentucky Department of Education has revised the "Open-Response Questions in the Classroom Manual." The updated manual, titled "Developing Quality Open-Response and Multiple-Choice Items for the Classroom," now contains guidance for constructing both Kentucky Core Content Test-like open-response and multiple-choice items. Tips for creating scoring guides and improving classroom practice, as well as an electronic open-response template, also are included.

<http://education.ky.gov/JumpTo/?jump=QuestionsManual>

Register online for ILP fall training

Online registration is open for 34 hands-on, Web-enabled Individual Learning Plan (ILP) training sessions this fall at 18 locations across the state. Principals, teachers, counselors and student leaders will learn to use the student ILP and the school ILP, as well as how to implement the ILP in their schools. Sessions will be filled on a first-come, first-serve basis.

<http://education.ky.gov/JumpTo/?jump=ILPTraining>

Toyota Teacher Program

Applications are now being accepted for the 2008 Toyota International Teacher Program to Costa Rica. All full-time classroom teachers in grades 7-12 are eligible to apply. Those selected for this fully funded trip will learn about the environment, culture, history and education system of Costa Rica. The deadline to apply is Sept. 7.

www.iie.org/toyota

Bulletin Board is compiled by Rebecca Blessing
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Commissioner's Comments

Every child – proficient and prepared for success

By Kevin Noland

Interim Commissioner of Education

I certainly was not expecting to be writing a column for *Kentucky Teacher* this school year. However, the search for Kentucky's fourth commissioner of education hit a stumbling block in July when Barbara Erwin, the Kentucky Board of Education's candidate for the position, declined the appointment just a few short days before she was to take office.

As the article on the front page tells you, I am currently continuing to serve as interim commissioner. However, the search has already begun to find a long-term interim commissioner to serve while the search for an individual to fill the permanent position is in progress. The search may take several more months.



Photo by Creative Services

Noland

At a special-called meeting July 14, the board also announced that the Kentucky Department of Education would post a call for applicants for both the interim and the permanent position on its Web site (www.education.ky.gov).

For now, we begin the 2007-08 school year without a permanent commissioner of education. While it's not what we planned, it is something we can all manage – if we all keep our eyes focused on the goal of proficiency for all.

The department's logo is a good reminder for all of us. The logo shows two figures reaching for a star, superimposed on an outline of Kentucky. The words "Every Child – Proficient and Prepared for Success" are emblazoned around the figures. This short, straightforward message is basic, but I don't

believe there is a better expression of Kentucky's education goal.

We must continue working toward this goal of leading every child in Kentucky to proficiency and preparing each child for success. We must find the best way toward that goal for every child.

From kindergarten to high school, students crave interesting, engaging learning experiences. They want to be challenged and to feel that their time in school is worthwhile.

They want to do well. None of these children want to believe that they are destined for failure.

We often get lost in the maze of assessments, funding, special programs and other attention-getting issues that surround the process of teaching and learning. We must focus our eyes on the true prize: our children. We must devote all of our energies to making sure that, for the school children

of Kentucky, "Every Child – Proficient and Prepared for Success" is a commitment, not a slogan.

Our goal of proficiency by 2014 is only seven school years away. Let's begin this school year with a call to action to increase our advocacy for high achievement for all students.

As adults working together toward a common goal, we can meet the challenge of making our schools accountable to parents and taxpayers, and accountable for children.

The Kentucky Board of Education and the staff at the Kentucky Department of Education are working hard to increase support for Kentucky's public school system. We are working hard to enable your efforts to make our children "Proficient and Prepared for Success."

(Contact Interim Commissioner Noland on this topic at kevin.noland@education.ky.gov.)

2007-08 school year begins with new department leaders

By Lisa Y. Gross

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Four long-term Kentucky educators have filled leadership posts that were vacated last spring and summer by retirements in the Kentucky Department of Education. Elaine Farris, Ken Draut, Jamie Spugnardi and Larry Stinson joined the department prior to the beginning of the 2007-08 school year.

Farris, former Shelby County Public Schools superintendent, is the new deputy commissioner of the Bureau of Learning and Results Services. She will oversee five offices: District Support Services; Teaching and Learning; Assessment and Accountability; Leadership and School Improvement; and Special Instructional Services.

The offices, and the divisions and branches within, provide services to public school districts that include finance, facilities, nutrition, curriculum development, virtual learning, early childhood education, assessment, school improvement, school assistance, special needs, career and technical education, federal programs, and teacher and student diversity.

Draut, former director of the Planning Unit for Jefferson County Public Schools, is the associate commissioner of the Office of Assessment and Accountability. Spugnardi, former director of instructional support services for the Green River Regional Educational Cooperative (GRREC), is the associate commissioner of the Office of Teaching and Learning. Stinson, retired Ft. Thomas Independent superintendent, is associate commissioner of the Office of District Support Services.

Farris has served as Shelby County superintendent for the past three years. She has nearly 30 years of educational experience as a teacher, elementary director, assistant elementary principal and elementary prin-

cipal in Clark and Fayette counties. She participated in the department's Minority Superintendent Internship Program. Farris fills the post vacated by Linda France, who retired.

Draut comes to the department with 23 years of educational experience. In addition to managing planning and evaluation programs for Jefferson County Public Schools, he provided analysis of assessment and accountability policies.

He has served as a district assessment coordinator for Jefferson and Henry counties. He was an education consultant and education manager for the department from 1984 to 1991. He replaces Pam Rogers, who retired.

As instructional support services director for GRREC, Spugnardi provided profes-

sional development resources, coordinated grant budgets and facilitated development of standards-based units of study for local school districts. During her 26 years as an educator, Spugnardi has served as site coordinator for the Model Teacher Preparation Program at Western Kentucky University and as director of a regional resource center for local school districts that was operated by the Department of Education.

She is a former elementary school teacher in Warren County and served as a Kentucky Distinguished Educator from 1994-1997. She replaces Starr Lewis, who retired.

Stinson led the Ft. Thomas school district for 13 of his 34 years as an educator. He also was superintendent for two school districts in Indiana. As a superintendent in both states, he has handled many finan-

cial duties, including tax rate calculations, state funding estimates and budget development.

In addition, Stinson has been an assistant professorial lecturer at Thomas More College, a high school principal, a teacher and a band director. He replaces Kyna Koch, who retired.

Individual news releases about the appointments of Farris, Draut, Spugnardi and Stinson are posted on the department's Web site.

MORE INFO ...

www.education.ky.gov – Click on "News Room" in the left-hand menu. From that page, select "Current Press Releases & Advisories."

Gathering the results

LaVanda Holloman, front, writing/open response coach at Crittenden County Elementary School, and Tammy Brantley, 4th-grade teacher at Crittenden County Elementary, concentrate on evaluating and assigning scores to student responses on the Kentucky Core Content Test (KCCT) administered to public school students last spring. Holloman and Brantley, members of the statewide Scoring Accuracy Assurance Team that checks the quality of portfolio scoring, also were involved in scoring portfolios. Measured Progress, the state's primary testing contractor, hired hundreds of current and retired teachers and non-educators with backgrounds in education or the contents they scored to work in its Louisville scoring facility reading and scoring the KCCT as well as assessments from other states. School scores from Kentucky's 2007 assessment will be released in September.



Photo by Tim Thornberry, Education Cabinet

District-wide collaboration enhances school libraries

By Linda Jones

Wayne County Public Schools

Wayne County school district's five library media specialists are reaching out to students in a variety of ways to increase student literacy. This re-energized outreach is the result of a new district-wide collaboration that began last school year.

The five librarians began meeting in September 2006 to discuss how they could best use a federal Improving Literacy Through School Libraries grant. Winona Griggs, director of elementary instruction for the district, helped get the group thinking about using assessment data to select the books and technology their schools needed to enhance student achievement in certain content areas.

The district's grant writer, Kim Gooch, worked with the librarians to custom design the grant proposal to meet those needs for several years to come. While the successful \$293,072 grant has helped the schools update library books, supplies and technology in their media centers, the librarians agree that their new literacy partnership is one of the greatest benefits of the grant.

Since they started meeting on a routine basis to work on the grant, the five librarians have created an effective district library program that provides high-quality materials and coordinated events and activities designed to instill a life-long love of learning and reading in students and their families.

"Collaboration is the key to our success," said Debra Bristow, Bell Elementary (grades 2-4) library media specialist and grant facilitator. "When you put together a group of five librarians with unique personalities – who are very sharing and have a common goal – you are going to get some pretty remarkable events and activities."

Indeed, that has been the case. The library media programs in each school blossomed last year with unique and clever ideas to turn students on to reading.

The librarians have worked hard to help their patrons develop a love for books. They have created special displays, theme parties, book fairs and special events. Some have extended library hours beyond the school day.

The Bell Elementary library media center, where Bristow is librarian, has become the scene of numerous guest reader events, family reading nights, grandparent receptions, character dress-up days and Accelerated Reader tea parties. Regular family after-school events attract as many as 140 students and parents.

"It has been so nice for our students and school to be able to participate in all the exciting activities that this grant has provided," said Wayne County Superintendent John Dalton. "Our media specialists have done a wonderful job designing this program and providing increased opportunities for our kids."

At the 2006 Fall Festival of

Writers, local writers, authors and journalists shared their craft with students and the community during a recognition reception at the Wayne County High School library. Last spring, the Literacy Through the Arts event at the newly opened Wayne County Middle School featured works of local visual and performing artists.

"Even though each librarian is at a different grade level, everyone has figured out how to use each others' ideas to be age appropriate," said Bristow. Each library media specialist serves a role within the larger group and finds ways to enrich the collaboration, she added.

For instance, Sharon Hill, Turner Intermediate (grades 5 and 6) librarian, shares ideas for events and projects that her colleagues have customized for their schools. "I've really enjoyed brainstorming together over day-to-day obstacles and coming up with solutions so our libraries run more smoothly," said Hill.

"Kathie Weston-Denney (Wayne County Middle School librarian) is the one with the most experience working with people. She guides us with her wise advice and gentle heart. Kathie is always adding the extra flair to any of our events," said Bristow.

"Nell Boils (Walker Elementary (grades K-1) librarian) is our cheerleader. She is always positive, even in the midst of a fire. She will be the storyteller or the server, always willing to take on

any role," noted Bristow.

Boils said the librarians collaborate to help students build a firm foundation of reading skills, research and reference skills, and communication and information skills. They also want their media centers to provide technology-rich learning environments.

The librarians continue to meet frequently to develop curriculum guidelines, plan special district-wide events and discuss genres of literature. They also attend professional development seminars and keep one another informed about new trends in library media education.

"Working and collaborating closely with the teachers in each of our respective schools is something I feel we do well," said Boils. "We all have the utmost respect and professionalism for the administrators, staff and students in each school."

Boils also pointed out that the school librarians have begun to network with library media specialists in other school districts and the local public library. The local public library currently supports the school libraries by labeling books to match the schools' Accelerated Reading program, if there is a

quiz available. The public library also maintains notebooks that students and parents can use to see if an individual school has the Accelerated Reader quiz.

The Wayne County school librarians also visited Corbin (Independent) High School's library media center and Borders Books, Music and Café in Louisville to find ideas for their own media centers.

Wayne County High School Library Media Specialist Carol Ford serves as the writer, designer and organizer of the group, according to Bristow. "She is constantly e-mailing newsletters, advertisements and other things that we incorporate to be our own and pass out in our own schools," she said.

"While I am a high school library media specialist, one may wonder what I could glean from four elementary and middle

school librarians. But the abundance of help and ideas they have shared with me has been instrumental in making our high school library media center a more active and integral part of our school," said Ford.

"From the sharing of ideas, to the browsing of each other's collections, to getting together frequently to plan and develop school and district literacy events, the ideas and information we have shared has been more than helpful in jump-starting promotions and events at our high school library media center," she added.

For instance, after learning how well attended after-school library events are at the elementary schools, Ford extended library hours at the high school. High school students now use the before- and after-school extended time to access books and computers for research and homework assignments.

These collaborative efforts made by the Wayne County library media specialists, their respective schools and the district will have far reaching effects in propelling Wayne County schools and their students toward proficiency, said Bristow.

(Linda Jones is the public relations coordinator for Wayne County Public Schools. She can be contacted by e-mail at linda.jones@wayne.kyschools.us or by phone at (606) 348-8484.)

MORE INFO ...

"Beyond Proficiency: Achieving a Distinguished Library Media Program" is a guidance document prepared by the Kentucky Department of Education. It is available online by going to www.education.ky.gov and clicking on the "KDE QuickLinks" link in the left-hand menu. Scroll down to "Library Media Program," and click.



Library media specialists in Wayne County Public Schools, Kathie Weston-Denney, left, Sharon Hill, Carol Ford, Debra Bristow and Nell Boils, standing, look over book selections as they make plans for an Arts in Literacy special event for students and the community.

Photo by Duchess Sloan



Photo by Melissa Webb Earnest, Caldwell County Schools

Getting online ILP on target

Caldwell County Middle School teacher Christie Gilkey, left, talks with 7th grader Dequaz Glover as he accessed his Individual Learning Plan (ILP) using the Web-enabled ILP version. Teachers at this middle school met near the end of last school year with students to discuss their future coursework and individual career goals. The new Web-enabled ILP helps Kentucky secondary students focus their coursework on personal goals as they prepare for postsecondary studies and careers. The Kentucky Department of Education conducted eight summer regional workshops to help counselors, teachers and administrators design and implement advising systems for their schools.

Many online learning providers share Kentucky virtual campus

Kentucky Virtual Schools (KyVS) is a new kind of partnership among state and local P-12 online learning providers in the state. It is focused on resource sharing and professional networking to support student achievement through excellence in online learning.

KyVS will take advantage of the new P-20 virtual learning initiative that is bringing P-12, post-secondary education and state agencies together as partners in everything from online content sharing to a single statewide Help Desk for online learners to leveraging procurement strategy.

As a beginning, KyVS will bring together on a shared virtual campus the Kentucky Virtual High School (KVHS), e-Learning Kentucky for online professional development and the online learning initiatives of the Kentucky Office of Career and Technical Education, Virtual Area Technology Center (KVATC). The KyVS campus also can be home for local and regional online learning initiatives, such as the Barren Academy of Virtual and Expanded Learning.

KyVS will continue to build affiliations among Kentucky's P-12 online learning community. In addition, it will sponsor national and international partnerships, such as with the

National Repository of Online Content and the North American Council for Online Learning.

The KyVS will continue to offer all services previously offered by the KVHS, but will expand its focus to supporting hybrid or blended learning environments in traditional classrooms. In this capacity, KyVS will provide local schools with access to high-quality online content, use of the Blackboard course management system and supports to help teachers integrate online learning in their instruction. The repository of instructional resources available for blended instruction includes formative assessments, instructional modules and complete course curricula.

"The Kentucky Department of Education believes that blended learning is a powerful strategy to provide differentiated instruc-

tion and a challenging curriculum to every child," said Linda Pittenger, director of the department's Division of Secondary and Virtual Learning.

The KVHS currently offers more than 60 online high school courses and online AP exam review. More than 30 online professional development courses for teachers and administrators, as well as virtual Communities of Practice, are available on e-Learning Kentucky.

The KVATC, an accredited district by the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Council on Accreditation and School Improvement, offers five online technical education courses. Several more little-cost or no-cost courses are under development that will offer blended learning opportunities for local school districts.

MORE INFO ...

www.kyvs.org

Kentucky Virtual Schools staff, toll free at (866) 432-0008, Jennifer Carroll, Virtual Learning Branch manager, jennifer.carroll@education.ky.gov; Beth Gaunce, teacher support for KVHS, beth.gaunce@education.ky.gov; Jessica Abbott, resource management analyst/teacher support for KVHS, jessica.abbott@education.ky.gov; Bob Fortney, e-Learning for educators/professional development for KyVS, bob.fortney@education.ky.gov; Anne Robbins, e-Learning for educators/professional development for KyVS, anne.robbins@education.ky.gov; Peggy Washington, public relations/marketing for KyVS, peggy.washington@education.ky.gov

Newspaper serial story focuses on civic literacy

Teachers looking for an authentic text resource for elementary history/literacy classes or to use in conjunction with a U.S. Constitution Day program on Sept. 17 will have to look no further than their local newspaper this fall. "Mr. Dogwood Goes to Washington" written by Kentucky author Leigh Anne Florence, will appear as a 10-week serial story in Kentucky newspapers beginning the week of Sept. 9.

Installments will follow two characters familiar to Kentucky students – Woody, "the wiener dog," and his sister Chloe – as they head to Washington, D.C., on vacation, learn about citizenship and find adventure. Readers will learn, along with Woody, about patriotism, American pride and the importance of historical documents such as the Declaration of Independence, the Constitution and the Bill of Rights.

Illustrations by James Asher of Princeton, Ky., capture Woody sniffing around Washington's historic monuments, the Capitol and Arlington National Cemetery as he discovers what freedom means.

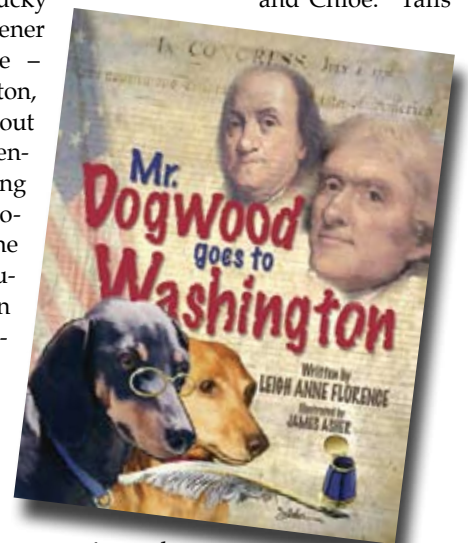
"This 10-week series in local newspapers provides teachers with timely curriculum for U.S. Constitution Day and discussions about why voting is important," said Kriss Johnson, Kentucky Press Association president.

Johnson said teachers interested in receiving copies of the 10-week serial for their students should contact their local newspaper now and ask to participate. The Kentucky Press Association, LG&E and Kentucky Utilities, both E.ON companies, and the Kentucky Sec-

retary of State's office are sponsoring the story and free scrapbooks for readers to use to collect each chapter of the story.

This year, teachers can access a podcast of each chapter being read aloud at www.kentucky.com and www.kypress.com. Questions and activities for each chapter also are available at those Web sites.

Kentucky teachers are familiar with Florence's other books about her dachshunds, Woody and Chloe. "Tails



from the Bluegrass" and "Tails from the Bluegrass II" both appeared as Newspaper in Education serial stories in recent years. "Tails from the Bluegrass" received the second-place award for Best Statewide Literacy Project in the 2005-06 Southern Newspaper Publisher's Literacy Contest.

MORE INFO ...

kjohnson@kypress.com
www.kentucky.com
www.kypress.com
www.thewoodybooks.com

Teachers and students offered computer and software savings

Kentucky public school students, educators and school staff can cash in on significant savings when they purchase computers through the Instructional Device Upgrade (IDU) project and Microsoft™ software through the new Student Select Program. Both programs are offered by the Kentucky Department of Education.

Desktop, laptop and tablet model computers are available from Dell, HP and Lenovo at about 50 percent below retail pricing for equivalent models. The available software includes full versions of Office 2007, Office 2004 for Mac and Windows Vista. Software is discounted at 50 percent to 90 percent.

Vendor-specific order forms are posted on the department's Web site for computer and software purchases.

MORE INFO ...

www.education.ky.gov/JumpTo/?jump=IDUPricing for IDU pricing
www.education.ky.gov/JumpTo/?jump=softcost for Student Select pricing

Collaborative classrooms benefit all students



Special education teacher Kelly Reynolds, left, and mathematics teacher Sarah White plan a lesson on surface area and volume for a collaborative geometry class they co-teach. They say planning is one of the keys to a successful collaborative classroom.

students receive the same content as everyone else in class.

However, the delivery of instruction, materials and performance assessments are modified depending on individual needs. Teachers rely on the information in each student's Individual Education Plan (IEP) to provide specific instructional modifications.

According to Reynolds, the end result is that students are more successful with the material, are able to retain the information for longer periods of time and tend to do better on state testing.

Reynolds says special education students also benefit

socially by being in a regular education classroom. "It makes a huge difference for them!" she says. "The stigma of having a disability is not as apparent as being placed in a resource room; their confidence levels increase as do their social skills."

Teachers and administrators are quick to point out that regular education students also benefit from collaboration. "They have two teachers present to help them. They tend to ask more questions, and class size is usually smaller so they receive more one-on-one assistance," says Reynolds.

In addition, the teachers say they are more willing in a collaborative classroom to "step outside of the box" and try new things to help students be successful. "There have been times when Kelly or I wanted to try a new activity, game or group work, but never would attempt it alone," says White.

She also says two teacher leaders make it easier to execute diverse classroom activities. She and Reynolds tend to use more kinesthetic activities than paper and pencil exercises to make learning fun, she says.

Collaboration also allows teachers to academically challenge students who are ready to move ahead or to re-teach those who may not grasp a particular concept. "The fact that two teachers are present eases the tension of having to teach and meet the needs of every student because both teachers can work together to help everyone," says Reynolds.

At Warren Central High School, teachers were asked to volunteer to work in the collaborative classrooms. Those teachers were then paired based on schedules and ability to teach a certain subject.

"Collaboration is so much more than having an 'aide' in a mainstreamed classroom," says White. "It's an adjustment and takes much work."

Reynolds and White say one of the keys to a successful collaborative classroom is training. They attended a series of sessions that addressed relationship building, differentiated instruction and scheduling for collaboration. The Green River Regional Education Cooperative offered the courses.

The two teachers brought that knowledge back to their school and district. Together, they have trained other teachers and equipped them with the tools to help make collaboration the best possible experience for the teachers as well as their students.

"Take time to learn the various strategies that have been proven to work in collaborative settings," advises White. "It takes active participation and dedication from both teachers to be successful."

Another key to collaboration is planning, Reynolds and White say. Common planning time is a plus. Without it, they say, teachers must make time before or after school or between classes to work together on lesson plans, to review content and to discuss modifications. Teachers with experience collaborating say joint planning is essential to making a collaborative classroom work.

What many teachers at Warren Central are finding as they collaborate is that many of the most effective methods, materials and management techniques are essentially the same for both student populations. White says teachers have learned the changes they make in instruction aren't just for the benefit of special education students, but for all students.

"As a regular education teacher, it has helped me understand the various abilities of all students," White said, "and the importance of variety in instruction and activities to meet all student needs and learning styles."

By Rebecca Blessing

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Walk down the hallways at Warren Central High School and chances are you'll see something you don't see in most high schools. In about 20 classrooms throughout the building, you'll find not one, but two teachers sharing the responsibility for instruction.

It's part of a growing initiative in Warren County Public Schools to provide classrooms in which both a regular education teacher and a special education teacher collaborate to deliver instruction to both regular education and special education students.

Special education students have been mainstreamed into regular classrooms in Kentucky for years. However, inclusion in a collaborative classroom goes a step further. Not only are all students exposed to the same curriculum, all students and all situations are considered when teachers create and modify lessons.

"At our school, the majority of teachers use the co-teaching collaboration model," says Warren Central special education teacher Kelly Reynolds. "In many of our collaborative classes you will see both teachers delivering content and both teachers making modifications, even though the regular education teacher is considered the content teacher and the special education teacher is considered the modification teacher."

Reynolds and mathematics teacher Sarah White collaborate to teach two sections of basic geometry.

"So often a teacher's idea of collaboration means the regular education teacher teaches and the special education teacher sits back and watches, grading papers or playing the role of discipline police. This is NOT collaboration," says White. She says in a collaborative classroom both teachers share teaching responsibilities.

"Obviously, the teachers know who is special education and who is not, but we do

not divide up our classroom or responsibilities by such labels," White says. "We both consider all students our own and work together to get the job done for everyone."

Prior to collaborative classrooms at Warren Central, most special education students at the high school received instruction from a special education teacher in a separate resource room. Reynolds says the problem with that model was that not all special education teachers were highly qualified to teach every content area.

Now, students who could benefit from a collaborative classroom are placed according to their needs. Reynolds says being in a collaborative classroom has forced her to brush up on core content and made her a better teacher.

In a collaborative classroom, all students use the same curriculum. Special education



Teacher Rhonda Biller, second from left, helps Warren Central High School student Jona Melander while teacher Brittany Flener, standing, helps David Denning during a collaborative study skills class. Having a special education teacher and a content teacher in the classroom allows for more one-on-one help for all students in the class.

Photos by Rebecca Blessing

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Photo by Tim Thornberry, Education Cabinet

Berea (Independent) High School student Miata Fields works with Dalton Hall, a Berea Community Middle School student, as part of a unique peer-tutoring program in the school district. The program, which matches high school students with special education students, benefits both the regular and special education students, according to Michelle Robbins, a special education teacher at the schools.

New special education program focuses on student performance

By Cathy Lindsey

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Special education teachers in Kentucky should expect to receive additional support and guidance this school year as refinements are made to the Kentucky Alternate Assessment Program. After implementing the revisions to Kentucky's alternate assessment system last school year to comply with federal mandates, the Kentucky Department of Education has identified needed midcourse adjustments, including additional teacher training.

"Special education teachers have begun to increase their knowledge of core content and how to apply grade level standards to meet the needs of their students," said Larry Taylor, director of the department's Division of Exceptional Children Services. "We've found that additional training is needed for special education teachers in adapting curriculum and overall understanding of the changes."

State education leaders have long set high expectations for all students – including those with disabilities. In fact, Kentucky has the longest history of an inclusive state assessment system among all 50 states. Requirements have been in place since 1992 for all students to participate in state assessments.

With the implementation of the federal No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB), Kentucky legislators added a provision in 2003 to state law that requires every Kentucky school to address academic achievement gaps by examining disaggregated student data and setting targets for improvement.

These laws, along with the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA),

require that all students – including those with disabilities – participate in state assessments. In Kentucky, most students with disabilities participate in the Commonwealth Accountability Testing System assessments with or without accommodations. A few students with significant cognitive disabilities are permitted to participate in an alternate state assessment.

Prior to the requirements of IDEA and NCLB, the Kentucky Department of Education developed the Kentucky Alternate Portfolio Assessment. Its focus was on improving the quality of student programs so all students could have the opportunity to achieve.

While it was innovative at that time, the alternate assessment portfolio was ruled non-compliant with the latest federal requirements of IDEA and NCLB, said Taylor.

Kentucky previously assessed students with disabilities once at the elementary level, once at the middle school level and once at the high school level. NCLB requires that progress be measured annually in grades 3-8. IDEA requires alternate assessment to mirror assessment of the general education population.

The new Kentucky Alternate Assessment Program (KAAP) measures student achievement annually against alternate achievement standards that are linked to grade-level content. KAAP requires that students with disabilities be assessed on the same content areas as their non-disabled peers.

Alternate assessment standards now must be linked to state standards in each of the seven grade-level content areas. Rather

than being scored holistically, as in the past, each content area will be addressed and scored separately, just as they are for students without disabilities.

"In the new system, content areas are more focused and standards-based," Taylor said.

Special education teachers in Kentucky participated in the selection of an abbreviated number of content standards for assessment now required by the alternate assessment. The more-focused content is taught and assessed in a meaningful and functional manner that is applied to life skills.

"Students participating in the KAAP need to have application of the skills learned," said Toyah Robey, branch manager in the Division of Exceptional Children Services. "Presenting content-area academics in a more applicable manner helps students generalize skills to daily life skills."

Student instruction and assessment are designed to promote student learning, Taylor said. The new program is student-performance focused.

The new program consists of a portfolio (in science, mathematics and reading), attainment tasks (in social studies, arts and humanities, practical living/vocational studies and writing) and a transition attainment record, which mirrors EXPLORE, PLAN and the ACT and focuses on transition and the application of life skills through English, mathematics, reading and science.

Instead of being scored by teachers regionally, KAAP is now using standardized scoring statewide. Measured Progress, the state's testing contractor, scores the portfolio in partnership with Inclusive Large-Scale Standards and Assessment.

The department's Division of Exceptional Children Services has developed a Plan of Action for Next Steps to support teachers in the field. This includes ongoing communication with teachers, district assessment coordinators, directors of exceptional children and parents.

The 11 special education cooperatives throughout the state are helping teachers with the refined program. During the summer, the cooperatives provided training for teachers to review participation guidelines and helped arrange meetings with parent groups.

Online training for teachers administering the KAAP will begin in August, along with monthly Webinars (Web-based seminars). The Webinars will lay the foundation on which further face-to-face training will build.

"One function of the Webinars is to get teachers comfortable with the changes and in touch so they don't feel so isolated out in the state," Robey said.

The Webinars will include specific examples of how to use links to grade-level standards to meet specific student needs.

"Teachers have produced excellent samples of information that we want to share with others," Robey said. For example, by videotaping one classroom lesson, many teachers can see, "What did math instruction look like at the elementary level?" she said.

Cheryl Pulley, a Department of Education consultant, will coordinate hands-on training for teachers statewide. This is expected to begin in September. The training will build on linking standards to instructional practice, illustrating best-practice instructional classroom examples, understanding cognitive demand of instruction and assessment, and depth of knowledge and relationship to difficulty of tasks.

In November and December, the department will further assess teacher needs and needed adjustments to KAAP. The Kentucky Council for Exceptional Children will host a parent workshop in November to provide additional training for parents.

"We know we need to properly prepare teachers for the changes that are taking place," Robey said, "and we continue to believe that

with quality instruction, high expectations, and reliable and valid assessment, Kentucky will continue to lead the way in educational assessment of students with disabilities."

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Teacher cadets get an education in education

By Cathy Lindsey

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Remember the first time you thought, "I want to be a teacher"? Did you come to that decision after envisioning images of yourself helping happy little children learn?

Did you imagine providing lessons that excited and motivated your students to learn more? Did you see yourself making a difference in the lives of the children you were teaching and the world?

Chances are your decision wasn't based on the reality of spending countless hours on lesson planning and grading homework, sacrificing personal time for after-school meetings or using your own money for extra classroom supplies. If you knew then what you know now, would you have made the same choices?

Some John Hardin High School students who may be considering a career in education are getting a closer look at the profession – warts and all. The school's Teacher Cadet Program offers hands-on experience to students so they can separate the ideals of being a teacher from the realities of the classroom.

"It's good to know what I might be getting in to if I decide to pursue this career,"

said Jessica Robinson, a student who completed the program and graduated from John Hardin last spring.

According to a new study from the National Education Association, half of the nation's new teachers are likely to quit within their first five years in the classroom because of poor working conditions. That's a statistic educators in Hardin County would like to improve through the Teacher Cadet Program.

"No one should make any career decision without gathering as much information as possible," said Steve Brown, retired principal and former coordinator of the Teacher Cadet Program.

The semester-long course begins in a classroom at the high school. The cadets receive introductory lessons in classroom management and instructional strategies. They also study different learning styles, discipline techniques and how to use technology to enhance teaching and learning.

The next phase of the program provides hands-on experience. The cadets observe and assist teachers at the neighboring New Highland Elementary and Bluegrass Middle schools.

To get a better grasp of the diverse school concept, cadets are encouraged to switch classrooms halfway through the program to get an idea of how teaching and learning styles vary at different grade levels and in content areas.

Bethany Bird, a senior at John Hardin, participated in the course last spring. She said she thought taking the course would be a good idea to see if she really wanted to be a teacher.

The experience was very rewarding, she said. She led reading groups, graded homework, provided students with one-on-one help in class and just spent time with the younger children. She said her favorite part of the program was building relationships with the students and her teacher mentor, Melissa Wyman, a pri-



Photos by Tim Thornberry, Education Cabinet

Bethany Bird explains a classroom assignment to primary students at New Highland Elementary (Hardin County). Bird, who is a senior this year at John Hardin High School, participated last spring in the high school's Teacher Cadet Program to explore teaching as a career.

mary teacher at New Highland Elementary last year.

"This was an unforgettable experience," Bird said. "I would highly recommend this course to other students who are interested in working with kids."

Wyman, Bird's teacher mentor, said she considered herself lucky to have an extra pair of eyes and hands in the classroom. "Having a teacher cadet was extremely helpful," she said. "I was able to participate more with the students and stay better organized."

Wyman said she hopes this program continues to grow – not only in Hardin County, but in other districts.

"It's a win-win-win situation for all of us," Wyman said. "The younger students are getting more attention, the cadets are getting the experience of working in the classroom, and teachers are benefiting from the extra help."

The program at John Hardin is open to juniors and seniors who are interested not just in teaching but also in learning more about opportunities in the education field or other professions that work with children. Participants must be recommended by a teacher and then pass a screening process conducted by the program coordinator.

Cadets undergo weekly evaluations by the classroom teacher to whom they are assigned. The cadets also draft lesson plans and deliver presentations to the younger students during the semester. The cadets

are graded on a combination of the evaluation results, their classroom presentations and a final test on lesson planning and instructional strategies.

"Our teachers love having teacher cadets," said Connie Goff, principal at New Highland Elementary. "Plus, it's a great teacher recruitment tool."

Goff explained that the experience, be it positive or negative, helps students determine whether teaching is a likely career. The class may scare some students away from teaching, but others may discover it is the career for them, she said.

Because many teachers who are "baby boomers" are at or near retirement age, younger teachers are "dropping out" of the profession at increasing rates and student populations are growing, the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics indicates there will be countless job openings throughout the country for teachers over the next 10 years.

"I don't know if I'll be a teacher or not," Bird said, "but at least this experience has given me a better understanding of the commitment it takes to be a teacher."

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Jessica Robinson, a recent graduate of John Hardin High School, said the Teacher Cadet Program helped her learn more about what it takes to be a teacher.

ERWIN from Page 1

not plan to hire an outside firm to help in this search, but will seek input from individuals and groups across the state.

The board's desired characteristics for the next commissioner include:

- success in meeting the challenges of leading a large organization dedicated to ambitious goals, high standards and continuous improvement
- an understanding and appreciation of Kentucky's institutions, culture, and political and educational leadership
- a proven record of implementing programs that address the achievement gap with an emphasis on special needs, gifted and talented, African-American, Hispanic, culturally and linguistically diverse, and low socio-economic students, while focusing on the needs of all students

- a commitment to producing measurable results in low-performing schools and reaching the goal of proficiency by 2014 in all Kentucky schools

Applicants for either the interim or full-time position should send a letter of intent and a complete resume/vita to:

Jill Hunter, Director
Division of Human Resources
16th Floor, 500 Mero St.
Frankfort KY 40601

or send e-mail to jill.hunter@education.ky.gov

The Kentucky Board of Education does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex, age, religion, veteran status or disability in employment or the provision of services.

KTLC 2008 is March 5-7

Make plans now to attend the Kentucky Teaching and Learning Conference (KTLC) March 5-7, 2008, at the Kentucky International Convention Center in Louisville. The conference theme is "Student Learning for the 21st Century – Every Child, Every Day."

The three-day event will showcase excellence in teaching and learning from public schools and districts throughout the state. In addition, featured speakers and representatives from the Kentucky Department of Education and its education partners will discuss their work that is aligned to various aspects of student engagement.

Conference organizers have issued a Call for Presenters to lead one-and-one-half hour workshops and sessions. Presentations can range from hands-on, interactive minds-on workshops to sessions featuring individual presentations, panel discussions or hands-on education activities. The online application to present is posted on the conference Web site.

- Rick Stiggins, founder of the Assessment Training Institute in Portland, Ore., which for the past 15 years has been helping teachers and school leaders understand how to use the assessment process and its results to benefit student learning
- For nearly 30 years, Kentucky educators have attended KTLC to share the most current, relevant, research-based ideas and strategies for positively impacting and supporting student learning using technology as a tool. The 2008 conference will focus on five areas of education: assessment for learning, closing the achievement gap, successful school culture, teacher leadership and technology.

Schools and districts can earmark professional development dollars now so that teams of educators can benefit from early registration rates. Full conference registration by Feb. 22, 2008, is \$150. There is no additional charge for workshops; however, registration is required. Onsite registration is \$175.



Featured speakers confirmed at press time are:

- Timothy Shanahan, director of the University of Illinois Center for Literacy, former director of reading for Chicago Public Schools and author of several instructional reading and reading intervention programs (K-8)
- Margaret Heritage, assistant director for professional development at the National Center for Research on Evaluation, Standards and Student Testing at the University of California at Los Angeles and co-author of books on formative assessment for literacy

School and district teams of five or more people qualify for a group discount, which waives the full registration fee for one person. To receive the \$150-value discount, registration must be submitted as a group with one payment. Complete registration information and an online registration form can be found on the conference Web site.

MORE INFO ...

<http://kentuckytlc.org>
www.education.ky.gov – Click on the KTLC logo in the left-hand menu.

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STATE from Page 1

of the Commonwealth Accountability Testing System (CATS) high school accountability formula for 2006-07 results.

The ACT will be administered statewide to all 11th graders March 11, 2008. In 2007-08 and subsequent years, PLAN and the ACT results will compose 5 percent of the CATS high school accountability formula.

During an independent alignment study of the ACT, teams of teachers, administrators, university staff and external experts analyzed the match between the ACT and the Kentucky Core Content Test (KCCT) in reading, writing, mathematics and science. The results were shared with the National Technical Advisory Panel on Assessment and Accountability (NTAPAA). NTAPAA is a group of national testing experts that has been advising Kentucky on assessment and accountability policies since 1995.

Department staff reported to the board that NTAPAA concluded the augmenting of the ACT with KCCT test items is a complex problem. At its August meeting, the board will hear more details on the study results including recommendations from NTAPAA on how to proceed. The study is posted on the department's Web site at <http://education.ky.gov/JumpTo/?jump=ACTStudyMay07>.

ACT testing workshops

ACT Inc., which provides the readiness exams, will conduct introductory workshops in administering the test. This will be achieved using WebEx technology, called Webinars (Web-based seminars). The online training allows for interactive participation between trainers and participants.

Face-to-face training for the ACT site requirements will begin in December. The dates have not yet been set.

Also, department staff reported that the WorkKeys exam, which assesses workplace skills, will be administered during the 2007-08 school year. A possibility of multiple assessment windows and/or an online test format is being discussed to allow for more student flexibility.

The board gave final approval last February to the regulation outlining the state's new formula for determining school accountability. The revised regulation required that norm-referenced tests in elementary and middle schools be administered and reported but that results would not be included in the calculations of the CATS accountability index.

The regulation permitted elementary schools the flexibility to choose a norm-referenced test approved by the department to be administered in reading and mathematics once during elementary school with results reported publicly and discussed with par-

ents. At middle school level, EXPLORE is designated to be administered at grade 8, reported publicly and discussed with parents. EXPLORE also is intended to be used in the development of a student's Individual Learning Plan (ILP).

A legislative subcommittee told the board its interpretation of statutes related to this matter is that a single, uniform elementary norm-referenced test should be required and that results should be included in the elementary accountability formula. At middle school, legislators indicated that the board should inquire about reserving a form of EXPLORE for Kentucky and that EXPLORE results should be included in middle school accountability.

Also at the June meeting, the board learned that to add back a single, uniform assessment at the elementary level would require the release of a Request for Proposal to secure a vendor for an elementary norm-referenced test. Additionally, the board would need to determine a grade level at which to administer the test.

Department staff recommended implementing the legislative interpretation at the beginning of the next biennium (2008-09 school year) to keep the rules the same for the current two-year testing cycle (2006-08). The board will continue discussing the proposed changes to this regulation at its August meeting.

After considering comments submitted at the public hearing on May 31, the board also made final changes and approvals to special education regulations and to regulations related to the Kentucky High School Athletic Association (KHSAA). The regulations as amended now proceed to a legislative committee for review.

The board also heard presentations at the meeting from 2007 Kentucky Teacher of the Year Suzanne Burkhardt, the Kentucky School for the Blind and the Kentucky School for the Deaf, the Collaborative Center for Literacy Development and the Kentucky Writing Project State Network.

The next regular meeting of the state board will be Aug. 8 and 9 in Frankfort.

MORE INFO ...

www.education.ky.gov – Click on "KDE Quick-Links" in the left-hand menu. Scroll down to "State Board of Education" and click for state board information.

– For more EXPLORE and PLAN results data, enter PLAN and EXPLORE in the search box in the upper right-hand corner.

<http://education.ky.gov/JumpTo/?jump=ACTStudyMay07>

TEACHERS

from Page 1



The Wizard, portrayed by Paducah cardiologist Patrick Withrow, gives important health information to Lion, McNabb Elementary writing instructor and literacy coach Carol Withrow, and Scarecrow, primary teacher Beverly Crockett, in "The Wonderful Wizard of Health."

helps the characters – and the audience – understand how to correct each health problem. The characters review the key messages of the play with a rap song.

Withrow wrote the play for teachers or community members to perform for students. However, she said students also could perform the parts. She already has begun sharing the play with teachers in other schools and soon will have lesson plans to accompany the play.

"The most important thing that I would like for teachers to gain from my experience as a playwright is that reading and writing are processes – for young students and for adults, as well," said Withrow. "It is imperative that our students see that, as adults, we are still learning through our own literacy experiences. By modeling and demonstrating our own skills as authors, our students

observe firsthand that literacy is important for life, not just in school or to pass a class."

Withrow's students have responded by writing their own plays that are performed or staged during morning school assemblies. These plays address real-life issues for students and provide advice on topics like speaking correctly, being responsible and dealing with bullies.

Hard-hitting message

In 2005, Lydia DiMartino-Ellis read a magazine article about high school meth-amphetamine use and its affects on young lives. She felt compelled to help students in Boyle County learn about "meth" abuse and its consequences through a play titled "Meth OD."

She applied for and received two Kentucky Arts Council Teacher Initiated Pro-

gram grants. With one grant, she brought a writing teacher to the school to work with 7th-grade students on writing poetry based on their research about meth. DiMartino-Ellis turned the poems into rap songs.

The second grant allowed 8th-grade students to work with a percussionist/choreographer. Students composed music for the show using household items – plastic cans, glassware, aluminum pans – that are used in the production of meth.

"The entire show is done through rap songs and percussive interludes," DiMartino-Ellis said. "There is a PowerPoint between pieces that gives statistical information and images."

In reviewing "Meth OD," a local newspaper described the 30-minute performance as "an in-your-face, in-your-eyeballs and in-your-eardrum passion play." That's what DiMartino-Ellis hoped to achieve.

"I feel it's important that my students see me as an adult who feels passionately about educating students, parents and the community on such a devastating drug," she said.

Through grants from A&E Television Network, the Kyle Foundation and Direct Experience in Artistic Living Inc. (DEAL Inc.), DiMartino-Ellis has been able to launch a 20-member touring company of "Meth OD" that performs free in schools. She currently is scheduling performances for the 2007-08 school year. She also is working on lesson plans that teachers can use in conjunction with the play.

Historical perspective

For years, the summer acting company at Old Fort Harrod State Park Theater performed for school groups and visitors to Kentucky's first permanent settlement. When the theater closed in 2004, Park Superintendent Joan Huffman connected with Kate Bortner who was teaching English/drama/humanities at Harrodsburg Middle and High Schools in Mercer County at the time.

Bortner agreed to write a play that her honors drama students could perform at the fort. In return, the park donated money based on attendance at the play to the high school drama department to help fund school theatrical productions and humanities field trips.

The play, "Kentucky Adventures," is chock-full of information about pioneer life in general and history specific to Harrodsburg and life at the fort. Real-life frontiersman Simon Kenton and fictional character Polly Pioneer narrate the play and get the audience involved onstage.

"I tried to incorporate social norms, folk lore, traditions and history to create the stories, the dialogue and the situations. The music and folk dance steps are historically correct as well," said Bortner. "Additionally, I followed elementary core content to add elements that would not only entertain but educate."

Bortner said she envisioned the play serving as a "jumping off point" to help students visualize life on the Kentucky frontier – especially after visiting the fort. She



Mercer County High School honors drama students perform "Kentucky Adventures" for student groups that visit Old Fort Harrod State Park.



Lydia DiMartino-Ellis, standing, talks to student cast members as they rehearse the music for "Meth OD."

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"Meth OD" – Lydia DiMartino-Ellis, (859) 238-1305, Ext. 8546, lydia.dimartino-ellis@danville.kyschools.us

"Kentucky Adventures" – Kate Bortner, (502) 228-0158, kate.bortner@oldham.kyschools.us

Old Fort Harrod State Park – Joan Huffman, (859) 7343-3314, joan.huffman@ky.gov

Leadership Letter

Compiled by Rebecca Blessing
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NCLB seems to be working in Kentucky public schools

As debate continues in Congress over the renewal of the federal No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act, a new report shows that NCLB seems to be working, at least in Kentucky. The study by the Center on Education Policy in Washington, D.C., looked at student achievement in all 50 states since NCLB took effect in 2002.

According to the report, in most states with three or more years of comparable test data, student achievement in reading and mathematics has gone up since NCLB. Kentucky is one of only five states with sufficient trend data in reading and mathematics that showed moderate to large gains. Kentucky is one of just nine states with sufficient pre-and post-2002 data to make greater average yearly gains in achievement after NCLB than before the federal law went into effect.

The study goes on to say that although achievement gaps between different student groups are still substantial, there is more evidence of them narrowing than widening since 2002.

Changed your address? Let us know

If you don't want to miss an issue of *Kentucky Teacher*, please take a few moments to learn how to let us know when your address changes.

Kentucky Teacher receives mailing addresses for all active Kentucky certified classroom teachers and administrators from the Kentucky Teachers' Retirement System. If you are a certified employee of a Kentucky public school, you can change your mailing information in one of two ways:

- Complete a change of address form that can be downloaded from the retirement systems' Web site at http://ktrs.ky.gov/01_active_members/B_change_name.htm.
- Submit a written request that includes your name, old address, new address, Social Security number and your signature.

Mail the form or your written request to: Kentucky Teachers' Retirement System
ATTN: Tammy Brown
479 Versailles Rd.
Frankfort, KY 40601

If you are not a current teacher or administrator, e-mail your change of address to kyteacher@education.ky.gov or by mail to:

Kentucky Teacher
612 Capital Plaza Tower
500 Mero St.
Frankfort, KY 40601

However, the report does conclude that it is very difficult, if not impossible, to determine the extent to which these trends are attributable to NCLB. Since 2002, schools, districts and states have simultaneously implemented many different but interconnected policies to raise student achievement.

Kentucky was one of the few states to earn praise for easy accessibility to its in-depth data on student achievement. State test results are made available directly to parents through the School Report Card and are available to the public on the Kentucky Department of Education Web site (www.education.ky.gov).

15 new Highly Skilled Educators begin their work

It won't be long until 15 veteran educators from 11 Kentucky school districts will be sharing their expertise with the students and staff at schools across the state.

Kentucky's newest Highly Skilled Educators (HSEs) participated in rigorous training this summer and will be assigned to schools that need assistance after assessment results are released this fall. They join 31 other HSEs currently helping low-performing schools improve their schools and increase student performance.

HSEs serve for two years and provide a number of services to the schools:

- assessing the needs of the school/district, including analysis of test data and the Kentucky Scholastic Audit Report
- leading the School Improvement Team in amending the Comprehensive School Improvement Plan
- assuring a focused use of Commonwealth School Improvement Funds within the school's budget
- providing professional development for teachers and administrators

Approximately 95 percent of schools served by Highly Skilled Educators have moved out of the assistance category by the end of two years of support.

Calloway County principal recognized for achievements

The Kentucky Association of Secondary School Principals (KASSP) has named Calloway County High School Principal Yvette Pyle the Kentucky High School Principal of the Year.

She was honored at KASSP's summer conference and will be recognized at the Principal's Institute and Awards Banquet in Washington, D.C. this fall.

As a result of Pyle's leadership, the total academic index for Calloway County High School increased from 67.5 to 81.4. In addition the attendance rate increased, while the dropout rate decreased.

The school also recorded an increase in its successful transition to adult life data. Pyle credits the efforts of an exceptional school team and student body for the positive changes at Calloway County High School.



Photo by Julie Ellis, Owensboro Independent School District

Leading his troop

Lt. Col. Nicholas Cheesman, senior Army instructor of the Junior ROTC program at Owensboro High School, far right, leads the cadence for cadets during a marching drill last spring. Cheesman, a retired officer who has been involved in high school military training programs for seven years, was called to active duty in Iraq last May. He will keep in touch with students this fall by e-mail and continue teaching "real-life" lessons from his military experiences in the desert. Public school teachers and administrators are among the thousands of Kentucky National Guardsmen and Reservists who have left their jobs to serve in the war.

Another school board goes paperless at its meetings

From now on, you won't see a lot of colored memos or hear a lot of paper shuffling at the Warren County Board of Education meetings. In June, the district joined more than 30 school boards in the state to have mostly paperless meetings. Instead of agendas and staff reports printed on paper, board members view documents and take notes using laptop computers.

The Kentucky School Boards Association (KSBA) promotes the e-meeting as a way to improve efficiency and save districts money. With the cost of paper, printing and postage going up, a district can realize several hundred dollars or more in savings per meeting, not to mention the savings in staff time preparing and distributing the paper materials.

According to Dara Bass, KSBA director of policy services, KSBA built the framework for its e-meetings software specifically for school boards in Kentucky after looking at what other states were doing. She says the system is training-intensive at first but an increasing number of board members are using computers in the work place and are becoming technology savvy.

The Daviess County Board of Education

was one of the first districts in the state to adopt the program. Daviess County Superintendent Tom Shelton says the e-meetings system helps distribute information to board members more quickly. It also allows for easier corrections or updates.

In addition, board members have ready access to board policies, as well as Kentucky regulations and statutes.

One other advantage, Bass said, is that the e-meeting system often helps streamline the meeting process. On average, school boards see their meetings shortened by about 20 minutes because board members are more engaged.

School councils conference

The Kentucky Association of School Councils (KASC) annual conference is Oct. 9-10 in Louisville. The theme is "Inspiring Excellence, One Student at a Time."

At the conference, participants will be able to take required training, attend informative and active sessions about what's working in schools, visit exhibits and network with colleagues. The conference also is a forum for the business of KASC.

The KASC annual conference is the largest school council gathering of the year. Online registration is available on the KASC Web site (www.kasc.net/conference.html).

Arabic language instruction brings understanding and opportunities



Photo by Rebecca Blessing

By Rebecca Blessing

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"Khalid." "Latifa." "Rafiq."

Hearing those names and seeing strange-looking writing on the classroom wall might make visitors think they've stepped into a story about the Middle East on the evening news. But this is no foreign land.

This is Touria Myers' classroom at Bowling Green (Independent) High School. Myers teaches the first Arabic language class offered at a Kentucky public high school.

"After 9/11, I started to notice that people here were very uninformed about the Arab people. Just because you speak Arabic or look like an Arab or you practice Islam doesn't mean you are a terrorist," said Myers. She started teaching Arabic to students as a way to promote a better understanding of the language, the culture and the people.

Myers grew up in Morocco speaking Arabic and French. She also studied Spanish. English is her fourth language, self-taught after she met her future husband who is a Monroe County, Ky., native, in France. She moved to

Kentucky with him 25 years ago.

"I have always wanted to teach Arabic," said Myers, who for the past two decades has taught French and Spanish in Kentucky public schools. Last year, she received approval from the school district to add an Arabic I class to her courseload. She hopes to add an Arabic II class this fall.

"Arabic is a very challenging language – especially for English, Spanish and French speakers – because it is a different alphabet, the pronunciation is different and the writing is different," she said.

There are 28 letters in the Arabic alphabet. According to Myers, each letter has at least two and sometimes three forms depending on where it falls in a word. In addition, different marks dictate pronunciation of letters.

"I am really impressed with my students because they can actually communicate in a basic conversation and write a paragraph," said Myers. She invites Arab students who are attending nearby Western Kentucky University to visit the class and give her students opportunities to practice their new language skills with

Teacher Touria Myers shows student Clayton Beck the correct way to form the letters of a word as he answers a question in Arabic on the overhead projector so other students can see. The class at Bowling Green (Independent) High School is the first high school Arabic class in Kentucky.

native speakers.

Myers follows an Arabic textbook curriculum and supplements it with her own materials. The school has purchased 10 Arabic-compatible computer keyboards so Myers and her students don't have to write everything in longhand.

"You go into it thinking it's going to be like any other language, that it's going to be the exact same alphabet except you write backwards. It's not like that," says sophomore Kelsey Hatcher. "You write from right to left, but the more difficult part is how you pronounce things."

Hatcher wants to learn Arabic so when she travels she can communicate with the native people.

Carrie Costellow, another of Myers' students, is spending seven weeks in Jordan this

summer. She was one of only 20 students nationwide to receive a scholarship from the U.S. Department of State to study the Arabic language and culture overseas. "It (learning Arabic) opens up a lot of opportunities if they would like to work with the government or business," said Myers. "The United States has many dealings with Arab countries. Now, more than ever, we need people who can communicate in Arabic and understand the culture."

Arabic is the fourth most-spoken language in the world, and the United Nations has adopted it as the sixth official language. It is one of the critical-need languages targeted in the National Security Language Initiative. (See box on this page.)

"Culture is part of almost every lesson," said Myers. As part of

the class, students study Arabic art, music and customs. They also learn basic Islamic beliefs. On Arabic food day, students had the opportunity to taste authentic Moroccan dishes.

"I love the food, especially the couscous," said Hatcher. "I didn't know the coffee and tea was so strong, though."

"It's really fun and enjoyable, and it's a great new experience," said sophomore Ben Loiacono.

"There's a lot of bias because of what happened September 11. But just because I'm learning Arabic doesn't mean I'm going to be a terrorist," he states emphatically. "When you understand the culture, you are more accepting of it. I think people should start to learn about other people across the world so they can learn to accept them."

Support is expanding for language learning

Don't be surprised if you hear about more Arabic classes being taught in Kentucky public schools.

Citing the need for more Americans to develop foreign language skills, the federal government has launched the National Security Language Initiative (NSLI). The NSLI is designed to dramatically increase the number of Americans learning critical-need foreign languages such as Arabic, Chinese, Russian, Hindi, Farsi and others through new and expanded programs from kindergarten through university and into the work force.

The comprehensive national plan will expand U.S. foreign language education with new programs and resources.

"We don't want to be left out in a knowledge gap when it comes to learning other languages and cultures," said Jacque Van Houten, Kentucky Department of Education world language and international education consultant. "Learning a foreign language gives students insight into understanding of not just the language but all cultures."

The NSLI is already under way in Kentucky. This summer, Northern Kentucky University offered a weeklong workshop for current and potential Arabic and Chinese teachers as part of its Intensive Summer Institute for World Language Teachers.

For a week in July, students in northern Kentucky, ages 10-17, had the opportunity to take free Arabic, Chinese, Japanese and other foreign language classes as part of a summer camp offered in conjunction with the teacher institute.

Northern Kentucky University was one of only 34 institutions nationwide to receive a first-year grant under STARTALK. This multi-year project is funded by the Office of the Director of National Intelligence as part of the NSLI.

"It's helping to bridge cultural differences," said Van Houten. "We're preparing students with 21st-century skills they need to survive and flourish in a multicultural and multilingual world."

MORE INFO ...
www.ncela.gwu.edu/spotlight/NSLI/